

# EARLY READERS NOW!



Book Buddy Handbook

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## **Book Buddy Handbook**

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# Welcome Early Readers Now!

## Book Buddies



Thank you for dedicating your valuable time to build tomorrow's readers. We are thrilled to have you as a partner in the effort to assist the young children in our community in their journey toward literacy. The purpose of the following pages is to provide you with information and ideas that will make working with your young and emerging reader an enjoyable and productive experience.

Your efforts will make a difference. Research has shown that volunteer readers can have a significant impact on a child's life. You will discover very quickly how important your reading sessions will be for you and your young reader.

**All the partners with Early Readers Now! want to make sure that you have a positive experience in your reading assignment. The volunteer coordinator at your place of employment will assist you in every way possible.**

Upon arrival at the child care center, you will want to do several things prior to your meeting with the child. In addition to selecting and reading the first book ahead of time, you'll want to be familiar with your place of employment's volunteer procedures. *You will also want to discuss with the volunteer coordinator the information regarding safety procedures for the building, the location of the adult rest rooms, the sign in/sign out procedures, and any other important information.*

**Again, your commitment to this cause is greatly appreciated. Together we can make a difference. Thank you!!**

# Goals of the Book Buddy Handbook

The goal of the handbook is to provide you with:

- An increase in understanding on how children develop literacy skills
- Enhanced strategies for working with young readers
- Strategies for Reading Aloud to young readers
- Reading list for suggested titles and questions for you to use with selected books

## Expectations of Readers

Now that you have made the commitment to answer the call to serve as a reader to early readers, you will want to examine the extent to which you will be able to participate. We recommend that you take this commitment very seriously. Experience shows us that consistency and commitment combined with preparation and a strong relationship are the key ingredients for a successful reading time together. As minimum, we suggest the following expectations:

Commit to one to one or one to two reading for at least 30 minutes, at least twice a month for a minimum of six months.

- Utilize the strategies in an effective read aloud session
- Plan ahead and communicate regularly with the director of the center
- Follow the volunteer procedures for your place of employment
- Most important of all – ENJOY!

## The Starfish Story

Sometimes when volunteers begin to read to children, they notice the number of other young children in need and wonder whether their effort of working with just one child will really make a difference. We share this story, adapted from the works of Loren Eiseley, to illustrate the impact that your commitment can have on just one child.

As an old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the ocean. Finally catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. He answered that the stranded starfish would die if left under the morning sun.

“But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish. How can your effort make a difference?”

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand, threw it to safety into the waves and replied, “It makes it a difference to this one.”



## Building the Relationship

One of the most significant aspects of your reading experience is the relationship you will develop with your “book buddy.”

You will begin developing this relationship during the very first reading session and continue building it as you progress through the time you have committed to reading aloud to this specific child.



As the adult, you set the tone for the reading sessions. The atmosphere you create should be warm, supportive and encouraging. Provide lots of honest, positive feedback and remember to provide opportunities for success each time you read aloud. Remember, it may take time for the child to get to know you, so be patient as he develops his comfort with your reading time together.

In order to foster a positive relationship, keep in mind the following principles:

### **Get to Know One Another:**

Take advantage of the first few sessions to get to know the child and to help him get to know you. Here are some suggestions for getting to know one another:

### **Play a Getting to Know You Game:**

Take the Sample Interest Questions listed in the appendix, write a few questions on strips of paper and put them in a bag or box. Take turns drawing a question. The reader and the child answer when a question is drawn.

### **Create an “About Me” book or page:**

Using the sample interest questions for ideas, select just a few of the questions and create a little homemade book or a one page summary about the child or about the both of you and what you have in common. Include simple illustrations, photos or magazine pictures to illustrate.

### **Share Your Interests**

You and your “book buddy” can bring pictures, favorite books, or treasures from home to show one another. One fun way to do this is to create an “All About Me Collage” using magazine pictures and words, family photographs and the names of your favorite books. Ask the child care center director in advance for a space to do this project in the center art area, when the art area might not be busy like outdoor time or circle time.

### **Talk with the Child’s Teacher**

In addition to finding out about your young reader’s interests and home experiences, you will want to know more about the child’s interest while he is in school. Although the child’s

work in a group setting may vary from what he is able and willing to do in a one to one reading session, the classroom teacher is a valuable resource for insight to the child's habits, speech, and early literacy opportunities with family. (e.g. A child whose parents are reading with him regularly will be able to sit for longer stretches than a child's whose parents are not or whose parents speak another language. Such information is VERY helpful before you begin.)

### **Create a Safe Environment**

A major obstacle to learning is fear – fear of failure, fear of criticism, and a fear of making mistakes. You can create a climate of acceptance in which your young reader gives himself permission to make mistakes. Encourage him to use these mistakes to help him learn. Although little children might be timid at first to point to a letter and name it, encourage him to do so when he feels confident and ready. And then allow him use his mistakes to learn and try again. Remind your book buddy that the only people who don't make mistakes are people who never try anything new.

A safe environment also has structure. Maintaining a routine in your reading session will add to the level of safety and comfort the child feels when you work together.

## **Establish Cooperation**

### **Kind but firm**

You can be a friend and mentor to your book buddy and still be firm when needed. An effective read aloud atmosphere will be friendly and demonstrate mutual respect.

### **Choices**

Give choices and allow the child's input into books you read. When giving choices a limited choice is most effective. Saying "Would you like to read *The Hungry Caterpillar* or the *Adventures of Taxi Dog* will allow for a choice while also maintaining structure. As your relationship develops and the two of you get more used to each other, you can broaden your questions about books to build on his interests. A good example is: "Since you went to the zoo yesterday with the class, would you like to read *Polar Bear*, *Polar Bear* or this other book about animals?"

### **The language of cooperation**

You'll find that redirecting behavior is more effective than correcting behavior. Try saying, "Alex, please finish your drink, then come over and show me which book you would like to read first," rather than, "Alex, stop playing with the water fountain and get over here. You are wasting time."

You can also describe what behavior you would like to see. Instead of saying, "Pay attention!" try saying, "when you help me turn the pages, we can finish this book and then it will be your turn to choose a book." Simply thinking carefully about how we talk to children about their behavior can improve cooperation tremendously.



## Listen

One of the many benefits of one-on-one reading time with your book buddy, is the time a book buddy has to listen. Teachers and parents often interact with children in group settings or while other activities are taking place. It isn't often that a child has the undivided attention of an adult. This opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas to a supportive audience allows them a chance to develop their oral language, critical thinking and confidence. You should also encourage the children to connect what they read to their own life experiences.

Child: "I have a blanket at home!"

Book Buddy: "You do? Like the one Owen has in this book? What color is it?"

Child: "It's pink, but it used to be red."

Book Buddy: "I love pink. Let's finish this book and find out what Owen does with his blanket when he goes to school."

This connection increases the enjoyment of what was read and heightens your young reader's comprehension.

## Model Literate Behaviors

Children who read outside of school are better readers in school. Demonstrate the enjoyment that you, as an adult receive from reading, as well as the enjoyment you experienced as a child. Carry the book, magazine or newspaper that you are currently reading. Share your favorite author or genre and show that you read for fun and to gain information.

## Maintain Trust

You will want to demonstrate that you value your time reading with your book buddy by attending your regularly scheduled sessions. Your consistency combined with enthusiasm will demonstrate your commitment. If you must reschedule, let the teacher and the child know as far in advance as possible.

## Expect success

Your reading sessions will be more effective and more enjoyable if you begin by focusing on what the child is able to do and then build from there. In the beginning, your book buddy may only be able to sit for reading for 15 minutes, maybe just 10. Read his cues (fidgeting, looking away, talking in the middle of a book) and move to something else to build your relationship. Maybe he would like to color with you or show you his cubby. Be patient and work on the relationship first, and then reading time second. It is important that you expect success.

## Understanding How Literacy Develops

One of the volunteers often to read. Reading



questions that early literacy wonder about is how children learn is a complex process and we all



learn to read differently. But one way of better understanding how children learn to read is to first examine how they learn to talk.

### **Learning Language**

Babies learn to talk because they listen others talk. As adults, we carry on conversations with babies even when we know that they can't understand us. The baby coos and we talk, the baby coos more and we continue the discussion as if it makes perfect sense. As the child grows, the babblings begin to sound more like words. We celebrate when a child first says "ma." We call everyone we know and tell them that the baby has said "Mommy!" None of us would dream of correcting the baby until they said Mommy properly. We celebrate each step, as the sounds they make become more and more like standard speech. Even though young children make many errors as they learn, our expectation is that they will learn to talk. We can look at the kinds of support we give children when they begin to talk to remember the support we should also give beginning readers:

#### **Children learn to talk by:**

- Being around others when they are talking.
- Listening to others talk to them.
- Talking to others.
- Talking by themselves.
- Having adults in their lives who fully expect that they will learn to talk.

#### **Children learn to read by:**

- Being around others when they are reading.
- Listening to others read to them.
- Reading to others.
- Reading by themselves.
- Having adults in their lives who fully expect that they will learn to read.

Reading is a more complex task than talking, yet we can use this comparison to remind us that each step a child makes towards literacy should be celebrated the way we celebrate the process of learning to talk. The comparison also reminds us of the importance of reading aloud to children, serving as a literate role model, listening to children read, and talking to children about what they read.

## **READING ALOUD**

Sometimes we underestimate the value of an activity such as reading aloud because it is usually so enjoyable for both the book buddy and the young reader. Instead, when well planned and implemented, a read aloud session can have a powerful impact on a child's literacy development. In 1985, the Commission on Reading published a report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. This report included the following statement supporting the importance of reading aloud to children:

**“Reading aloud is the single most important activity to ensure future classroom success for the child.”**

Wow! You can't ask for more impact than that. Let's look at why reading aloud is so important.

### **Reading Aloud to Children**

- Fosters a love and enthusiasm for reading.
- Allows children to hear stories they may not be able to read for themselves.
- Introduces a variety of story structures, genres, characters, authors and illustration styles.
- Models good oral reading.
- Exposes children to a rich vocabulary.
- Shares new information and builds background knowledge.

Let's take a moment to walk through some details of the read aloud process. Although it isn't complicated, you'll want to plan ahead and remember several things as you go.

### **Walking Through a Read Aloud:**

- Choose the selection you will read.
- When choosing the selection, keep these things in mind:
  - Select a story or poem you will enjoy
  - Choose one that matches the child's interest
  - Be sure it is on the child's listening level
  - Choose one with interesting illustrations
  - Read one that the child loved before

**1. Practice reading the selection aloud before you sit down with the child.**

**2. Introduce the selection to the child.**

During the introduction, talk about such items as:

- The author and illustrator
- Other books by the author you have read together
- Predictions about what the story will be about based on the cover and title

**3. Encourage your young reader to ask questions and share thoughts about the events in the selection as you read.**

- Ask the child to make predictions about the next event in the story
- Explain new concepts or words
- Share your thoughts about what is happening and ask for the child's thoughts
- Encourage the child to read along when you come to repeating parts of the text.

**4. Have a conversation about the section after the read aloud.**

Encourage your young reader to make connections between her own experiences and the story. Through conversation, you and your book buddy can imagine yourselves in the story and begin to wonder what you might have done differently or how you might have felt had you been the character. Just as we don't want to underestimate the value of reading aloud we also don't want to underestimate the value of talking about the story. The following are some phrases to help you guide the conversation.

- Why do you think the character...?
- What would happen if...?
- If you were\_\_\_\_\_, what would you have done?
- Have you ever...?
- That reminds me of...How about you?
- What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
- If you could be any character, who would you be? Why?
- That was funny when...
- I wonder if the author...
- What made that story so fun to read?

#### **5. Ask the child to retell the story as you listen.**

Retelling can also be a very natural way to share our enjoyment of a story. As an adult reader, you have probably told a friend about a favorite book. During the retelling, the child can describe in his own words all of the important events which occurred in the story. Retelling encourages skills such as deciding the most important events in the story as well as the order of the events. It is also a good indicator of comprehension. Retelling can be done verbally or in writing.

6. Celebrate the stories and poems you love and read them again and again.

## **Elements of a Good Read Aloud**

When reading aloud to your young reader, you'll want to keep in mind the following qualities of a good read aloud:

Inflection:	Change the volume and pitch of your voice to match the language and the mood of the selection.
Tone of voice:	Express yourself! Reading Aloud is an art that can be compared to music. Let your voice "sing!"
Illustrations:	Show the pictures! Celebrate the beauty, humor or originality in the illustrations.
Enthusiasm:	Choose books you love, and then share your love for them.
Gestures:	Move, move, move!

Eye Contact:	Look at the child as you read and enjoy the story.
Talk:	Discuss the story as you go and encourage the child to share. Predict what might happen next.
Volume:	Be sure the child can hear you read.
Pacing:	Not too fast. Not too slow.
Characterization:	Make the voices of characters as you read. Be the wolf! Be Grandma!



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How often should I talk to the teacher about the child I read to?**

The more you can tie your read aloud time back to what the child is doing at the center, the more relevance the book will have. Your young reader's teacher will more than likely be very busy and may not be able to give you as much time as you both would like. Therefore, it might be best to set up a separate time to meet, maybe every other month, to talk about goals and objectives you both have for your book buddy.

### **Is it okay to give treats to the child I read to?**

The most valued treat of all will be for you to give of your time and effort consistently. You will want to avoid the use of “rewards” such as stickers or candy. These types of treats move the focus of your interactions with the child away from the relationship and the reading to the material benefits of his meeting with you. On special occasions, a pencil or book is an appropriate surprise if you would like to do something special for the child. You will want to check with the teacher or the program coordinator first.

**What do I do if the child I read to talks non-stop and it begins to really cut into our reading time together?**

Talking is productive, but there are some children who enjoy talking so much that it is hard to get much reading done! You can listen while also redirecting the child back to the book. Make use of the time just before and just after your read aloud session to visit with the child and listen to his stories.

**What do I do if my book buddy won't talk at all?**

It takes some children a good deal of time to feel comfortable enough with a new person to open up. You will want to be patient as the child gets to know you. Other children are just quiet by nature, and others still may not have the verbal language needed for the interaction you are encouraging. When you talk together, give the child time to think and respond to your open ended questions rather than asking question after question, in the hopes he'll respond.

**How do I handle a situation in which the child won't cooperate?** Remember to give limited choices and keep the session fast paced and well organized. Speak with the teacher or volunteer coordinator for suggestions if the problem persists.

**How do I help an easily distracted child to focus?** A fast-paced, well organized session will help a child focus. If the book you've chosen is not holding the child's attention because it is too long or complicated, find another less complicated book. Once you have identified his comfort/reading level, it will be much easier to hold his attention.

## **Sample Interest Questions**

These interest questions can be used to begin conversations with a child. They are particularly useful during the first few sessions.

- When I have free time, what I like to do best is...
- I take special lessons or classes in ...
- If I could be anything I wanted to be, I would be...
- I like to collect...
- If I could travel anywhere, I would go to \_\_\_\_\_, because...
- My favorite games or sports are...
- When I draw or paint, I like to make pictures of...
- My favorite books and stories are...
- My favorite kind of music is...
- My favorite TV show is...

- I like Saturday because...
- Today I feel...
- When I have to read, I...
- I get angry when...
- School is...
- I can't understand why...
- I wish my teacher would...
- On the weekends, I...
- I'm afraid of...
- I wish I could...
- I love...

# Requirements for Participation

## Volunteers must have:

**A current Police Clearance.** The Criminal Records Section (Criminal Justice Information Division) provides police clearances to the public for many of the following needs: employment, licensing, adoption, apartment rental, hackers (taxicabs), or overseas travel. At least 95% of the citizens serviced (at our public service counters) are seeking a police clearance. If you have an arrest record, your wait may be somewhat longer than others.

Criminal Records	Information
Address	Henry J. Daly Building 300 Indiana Avenue NW MPDC Headquarters Room 3055
Hours	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9 am - 5:30 pm Wednesday: 9 am - 6 pm
Best Morning Hours	9 am - 10 am
Best Evening Hours	3:30 pm - 6 pm
Fee	\$7 (cash or money orders only; no credit cards or personal checks)
What's Needed	To make a request, you will need one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Driver's License</li><li>•Non-Driver ID</li><li>•Government ID (picture)</li><li>•Birth Certificate, with Social Security Card</li></ul>

## Things to Remember

- You must be 18 years of age to retrieve a police clearance.
- You cannot get information on juveniles.
- Read over information on your record before leaving service counter.
- Note the name of the clerk who served you.



**Persons living outside of the District or who are otherwise unable to come to the office in-person may do the following:**

Write a letter requesting your police clearance to: Metropolitan Police Headquarters, Mail Correspondence, 300 Indiana Avenue NW, Room 3055  
Washington, DC 20001

**The letter should include the following information:**

- Full Name
  - Date of Birth (month, date, year)
  - Social Security Number
  - Place of Birth
  - Race
  - Exact Street Address
2. Letter must be notarized (Notary Public)
  3. Letter must include a \$35 money order (personal checks *are not* accepted)  
payable to: DC Treasurer
  4. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope
  5. Businesses requesting clearances on individuals for employment must have a signed/notarized authorization form from the person to whom the record relates  
Please allow three weeks.

**2 Documented proof of a Negative TB test result**, obtained by your primary care physician.

## **Book Buddy Do's and Don'ts**

- **Do go to your site with a book buddy team member.**
- **Do confirm with the center director the morning of your reading.**
- **Do submit an evaluation form to your site coordinator within 24 hours of your reading time.** (Available on-line.)
- **Don't give the children gifts.**
- **Don't take your young reader to the bathroom.** (Ask a teacher to escort them.)
- **Don't no-show.**  
(Your book buddy is waiting for you. If you can't make it, please give the director more than 24 hours notice and reschedule within that week or next.)
- **Do tell your site coordinator if you suspect child abuse.**  
(The ERN Staff Person will contact the center director. No conversation with the teachers or child should take place.)

## **Other Book Buddy Responsibilities**

- To attend a Read-Aloud Orientation, sponsored by Early Readers Now!
- To be prompt and reliable in attendance and to notify the project supervisor of any absence or planned vacation.
- To call and confirm with the center director or the morning of a read aloud session.
- To follow instructions and request clarification, when in doubt.
- To refrain from making statements that could be construed as DHS policy or signing official correspondence.
- To observe appropriate standards of conduct for volunteers.
- To review and periodically discuss assignment progress with the project supervisor.
- To notify the Early Readers Now! Program of any changes in personal information (i.e., address, telephone number, etc.) and of changes in assignment.

## **Ethical Standards for Early Readers Now! Book Buddies**

Ethical standards for volunteers are consistent with standards of conduct for Government of the District of Columbia employees and reflect those standards. DHS and Early Readers Now! acknowledge the valuable contribution it receives through the interest, time, and experience given by volunteers. Because of the nature and extent of involvement of volunteers in DHS programs and activities, standards of conduct are set forth for the protection of volunteers and of DHS. Volunteer service shall be undertaken for the betterment of DHS and not for personal gain, other than the reward derived from such participation. An Early Readers Now! book buddy may not accept compensation for performance as a volunteer. Personal compensation includes gifts, fees, gratuities, or other dispensations to the volunteer or to members of the volunteer's immediate family or household.

# **ERN! Program Responsibilities**

The Early Readers Now! Program has the following responsibilities:

- o maintain a central register and the service records of all volunteers working in the program.
- To receive and fulfill requests from the DHS staff for participation in Early Readers Now!
- To provide volunteers with a general orientation and information about the Early Readers Now! program.
- To plan an annual appreciation event.

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